

Unified Economic Development Plan

2014 McIntosh County



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Unified Economic Development Plan

This plan provides a unified front for prospective businesses and sets forth implementable tasks for developing our workforce, spurring investment, and the creation of sustainable jobs in McIntosh County.

Introduction

The main goal of the Unified Economic Development Plan (UEDP) is ***to identify factors*** that are likely to be inhibiting economic growth in McIntosh County, to break those factors down into ***objectives*** that will resolve them, and then to develop ***tasks*** to accomplish each objective. The unified aspect of this plan identifies which ***economic development partners*** will be responsible for each task, and identifies areas for collaboration on tasks among economic development partners. Our recommendations are based on economic development principles and experience working with economic development partners and communities. Currently, the economic development partners meet on an as-needed-basis to collaborate on economic development issues and tasks. This task force is a benefit and driving force behind continued economic development within McIntosh County.

It's a common misconception that enticing an industry to locate in your community will develop a robust workforce and a vibrant locale. In fact, just the opposite is true. A community must invest in building a skilled, dependable workforce and a business-friendly environment in order to attract business and industry. In the old adage, build it and they will come, "it" is your workforce and your community's quality of life, "they" are the new businesses and the new jobs.

For each action item detailed in this plan there is an assigned lead entity and suggested timeframes for completion of each task. As in any economic plan, some tasks will be better suited as collaborative efforts among several of the economic development partners. For this plan, we define economic development partners as the key stakeholder groups represented at the stakeholder meetings; those tasks best suited as collaborative efforts have been highlighted.

McIntosh County has several groups focused on the community and creating a better environment in which to live, work, and play. A community roundtable bringing influencers from each of the community groups together on a quarterly basis would create synergy and further unification of the county. These meetings should serve as a conduit for information, strengthening community ties and leveraging assets.

Background and Assessment

McIntosh County was formed in 1793. Originally, it was settled by Scots Highlanders as a border colony for the more lucrative settlement of Savannah further north. The 2010 census lists the population for McIntosh as 14, 333. The county seat is Darien with a population of 1,719 and has the unique distinction of being the second city founded in Georgia.

Located along Georgia's emerald coast, McIntosh is largely undeveloped from a manufacturing standpoint. Nearly 75% of its residents commute outside of the county for work. As part of this process, we performed a SWOT analysis on the community. Our SWOT analysis was done through 24 formal interviews and 42 informal as well as first hand experiences of the team. A SWOT analysis looks at internal factors under the control of the community that can be deemed as strengths or weaknesses and external factors that cannot be controlled that are deemed as opportunities and threats.

The SWOT analysis and targeted industry analysis revealed that the

- **Strengths** for McIntosh are land availability, low government intervention, access to I-95 and the ports;
- **Weaknesses** for McIntosh are lack of immediate access to rail, distance from ports and major cities, the perceived detriments of the school system, lack of a skilled workforce, and lack of networking;
- **Opportunities** for McIntosh are capitalizing on the I-95 access, and being within the aerospace/defense corridor, and port access; and

- **Threats** are from surrounding areas with better schools, better developed industrial parks, and a larger, skilled workforce.

We have identified **ten** factors that need to be addressed in order to strengthen business development attraction. The factors are listed below with a brief overview followed by the goals and action items.

DRAFT

Factor 1: Positive Climate

A positive climate within the realm of Economic Development refers to a number of elements that combine to create a community that is a welcoming and vibrant, encouraging business development and economic growth. After careful review, several elements were identified that need strengthening to foster a positive climate for business. The general reaction from outsiders viewing McIntosh for the first time is that the community is dilapidated and unkempt. A number of blighted dwellings, roadways with overgrowth, signs that are run down and/or misspelled, buildings that have long since been vacated, and a general sense of neglect give credence to the echoes of visitors and new residents. An emphasis needs to be made to create a planned community effect and a sense of place by building sidewalks, eliminating blight, maintaining roadways, and installing more attractive signage. An overriding theme was that McIntosh lacked “brand recognition.”

To achieve brand recognition, McIntosh should embrace its coastal image – the shrimping industry and the abundance of marshes and waterways in the region. These elements lend themselves naturally to a nautical feel that should be replicated in signage and gateway monuments and other marketing elements.

The community must make every effort to keep the arterial roadways leading into the county and cities clean and free of debris and trash. Keep McIntosh Beautiful has a presence in the community, but more outreach is needed. Similar communities have used a bottom up approach when encouraging beautification campaigns by working with the schools. This would be an opportunity to get students from all grades involved in community-wide anti-litter campaign, while learning the importance of this concept. Moreover, students will be taking that message home to parents and other influential adults.

The local government has sufficient regulatory policies and has historically been seen as pro-business. In order to continue the pro-business trend, it would be within the best interest of residents and future businesses for the City and County governments to consider further consolidation of government services. A long term transition strategy to achieve this goal is recommended by the CRC. Through many interviews, it became apparent that there is a cultural

and political divide between the North end and South end of the county. This could also be rectified over the long term through consolidation of services. A divide of this magnitude could be an impediment to attracting business.

GOAL 1: LOCAL GOVERNMENT THAT IS TRANSPARENT, EASILY NAVIGATED, AND BUSINESS-FRIENDLY.

Action Items:

Local government to update and link the city and county websites within 6 months.

Local government to post current code enforcement ordinances relative to city and those relative to county on website within 6 months.

Local government to increase the number of code enforcement officers within 2 years.

Local governments need to review licensing and fee processes to improve efficiencies and streamline application processes within 6 months.

Development partners to establish an incentives matrix (number of jobs and capital investment equating to baseline local incentives from development partners) to assist with dialogue with prospective and expanding businesses within 6 months.

Local government to explore alternate incentives, such as reduction in wastewater and/or water fees along with the incentives matrix within 1 year.

GOAL 2: HAVE UP TO DATE INVENTORY OF AVAILABLE PROPERTIES FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT READILY AVAILABLE FOR SHARING WITH PROSPECTIVE BUSINESSES AND FOR ACCESS VIA WEBSITE.

Action Items:

Industrial Development Authority (IDA) to detail and catalogue all available land sites and existing structures within 3 months.

IDA to post catalogued information on IDA's website preferably with drill down features and current pictures within 6 months.

GOAL 3: CREATE A PLANNED COMMUNITY AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT WITH VISUAL APPEAL AND SENSE OF PLACE TO ENTICE BUSINESSES.

Action Items:

Local government to survey publically owned signage and create a plan for eliminating those with outdated information, duplication, and mending those in disrepair within 6 months.

Local government to implement signage plan within 6 months.

Local government (city and county) should consider passing a unified sign ordinances to regulate and codify signage within 1 year.

Local government to encourage responsible parties to clean up signs through the utilization of code enforcement and ordinances to guide local businesses to utilize productive signage continuous and ongoing.

Development partners to reorganize signage in gateway corridor to allow for easier navigation of increasing business traffic within 6 months.

To improve the city image, as part of local ordinances, all fading signage needs to be repainted or replaced within 1 year.

County code enforcement to monitor arterial roadways for signage offenses continuous and ongoing.

Local government to work with GDOT to keep entrance ramps and arterial roadways free from trash and debris within 6 months.

IDA to devise landscape plan to emphasize and enhance trees along Exit 49 within 1 year. Including maintenance plan and up-lighting for trees.

Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to catalogue blighted properties within downtown Darien within 3 months.

DDA to devise outreach program to educate on blight mitigation and work with owners to reduce blight, setting percentage goals of reduction in blight within 6 months.

Development partners to collaborate with community design expert to “brand” McIntosh through websites, social media, print, and signage within 6 months.

Development partners to collaborate on overall landscape design elements for gateway and public green spaces within 1 year.

Local government to revisit recycling as part of the waste services within 1 year.

Local government should work with waste services to do twice yearly large item pick curbside to help eliminate yard debris within 1 year.

Local government to research green initiative grant funding for sustainable communities to help build an image of a green community within 1 year.

Local government to coordinate mowing and landscape maintenance with Keep McIntosh Beautiful roadside trash pick-up to maximize effectiveness within 1 year.

GOAL 4: IDENTIFY INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS AND ADDRESSING THOSE NEEDS FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

Action Items:

Local government and IDA to work with GDOT on upcoming road improvements and widening of GA 251, including installation of sidewalks for pedestrian movement from businesses along I-95 to city center within 2 years.

Local government to construct a well-marked pedestrian crosswalk from the hotels on northern side of GA 251 to the outlet mall allowing pedestrians to cross safely and encouraging foot traffic to the outlet mall and surrounding restaurants within 1 year.

GOAL 5: ENCOURAGE CULTURAL ENDEAVORS IN MCINTOSH.

Action Items:

Chamber of Commerce to spearhead Community roundtable meetings to foster synergy between groups within 1 year.

DDA to support the arts through continued showcasing at first Saturday events.

Chamber of Commerce to support the arts through continued showcasing at Blessing of the Fleet.

DDA to work with cultural committee on finding a permanent home for cultural events in downtown Darien within 1 year.

GOAL 6: ENHANCE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM.

Action Items:

School system to develop a plan that will improve the quality of the K-12 school system with a goal to meet or exceed state averages and meet the needs of all students within 1 year.

School system to implement the Quality Improvement Plan over the following 3 years.

School system to give additional focus to providing academically challenging options for higher achieving students within 2 years.

School system to increase the graduation rate by 15% over the next 5 years.

School system to focus on fundamentals and increase national test scores in the next 5 years.

School system to track graduates for a 10 year period after high school graduation in order to get baseline statistics within 1 year.

School system to encourage after school program with added educational component to ensure the students can get help from school and community within 6 months.

School system to increase parental involvement in all grades within 1 year.

School system to increase volunteer opportunities through outreach with parents and community organizations at all schools within 1 year.

School system to set up mentoring and tutoring program utilizing community support throughout school system for at-risk and struggling students within 2 years.

Factor 2: Health Services

Currently, McIntosh is underserved by the medical community. As McIntosh is growing in the number of retirees, geriatric care including an after-hours clinic is needed. Industry will be hesitant to locate to an area with limited emergency care and medical services. As employees often use lunch hours to obtain general services, this is difficult if the nearest physician or dentist is in Brunswick. Currently, Darien has one dentist and two doctors. Considering the emphasis on health services, someone from the McIntosh County Board of Health should be invited to sit on the Economic Development task force.

GOAL: ATTRACT HEALTH CARE SERVICES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF FUTURE INDUSTRY AND AN EXPANDING WORKFORCE.

Action Items:

McIntosh County Board of Health to identify possible locations for an Urgent Care Facility in McIntosh County within 1 year.

McIntosh County Board of Health to negotiate with a health provider to provide a walk-in urgent care facility in McIntosh within 1 year.

McIntosh County Board of Health to negotiate with a health provider for a 24-hour emergency care facility in McIntosh within the next 3 years.

McIntosh County Board of Health to negotiate with senior care providers to locate a nursing home facility within 2 years.

Local government to consider offering additional senior and adult day care options within a senior center or negotiate through a private provider within 2 years.

Local government to consider combining senior centers and build a new senior center within 5 years.

Local government should identify location for new emergency medical services complex to service the north end of the County within 1 year.

Factor 3: New Business/ Industry Needs

McIntosh County will need to attract new business and industry through understanding the infrastructure needs of prospective clients. As McIntosh is mostly undeveloped, new business and industry needs will be a top priority for the community. A matrix of incentives proportional to the number of jobs created and the size of capital investment would provide a starting point for conversation and needed guidelines for negotiation. Working on economic gardening principles, the Chamber can provide support through its connections with local businesses. The continued dialogue between the development partners through quarterly or bi-monthly meetings can help all parties stay connected and provide synergy and accountability for individual projects related to the UEDP.

During the public forums, citizens brought up new ideas for how to repurpose the outlet mall. As the outlet mall is privately owned, the local government and IDA have little control over the management and purpose of the mall. The IDA and the local government have had conversations with the owners on numerous occasions to discuss ideas to bring vitality back to the mall. Currently, the Chamber runs the welcome center out of the mall to bring more travelers into the shopping center. The local government, as well as most of the McIntosh residents is dissatisfied with the ownership and lack of investment being put into the mall. The recommendation would be to continue to encourage the private owners to work with interested investors on bringing new life to the old mall.

GOAL 1: PROVIDE FRAMEWORK FOR IDENTIFYING NEW BUSINESSES/INDUSTRY PROSPECTS.

Action Items:

IDA to create contact list and track response and contact details to be kept confidential within 1 month.

IDA to update website and track visits to the website within 6 months.

IDA to identify potential EB-5 projects for the area and work with regional EB-5 center within 1 year.

IDA to attend conferences that relate to aerospace/defense, light manufacturing, and distribution & logistics to make contacts and market McIntosh – continuous and ongoing.

IDA to add contacts from conferences to contact list and utilize software such as Constant Contact to reach out to companies – continuous and ongoing.

GOAL 2: DECIDE ON INCENTIVES FOR NEW BUSINESSES/INDUSTRY.

Action Items:

Development partners to create a matrix of incentives proportional to the number of jobs created and amount of capital investment within 6 months.

Local government to consider additional incentives such as fee waivers within 6 months. This should be part of the incentives matrix.

Consolidation of county and city government services and/or departments where feasible to gain economy of scale to lower operating costs and ultimately to lower taxes.

Development partners to consider incentivizing for new businesses that are majority owned by women, veterans, and minorities. Contact with organizations such as The U.S Small Business Administration, Minority Business Development Agency, Defense Logistics Agency and Georgia Economic Development and Georgia Minority Supplier Development Council, Inc. within 1 year.

GOAL 3: INCREASE POSITIVE CLIMATE THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND CHANGES.

Action Items:

Local government to consider additional incentives such as fee waivers within 6 months. This should be part of the incentives matrix.

Consider consolidation of county and city government services and/or departments where feasible to gain economy of scale, lower operating costs, and ultimately lower taxes.

Local government to consolidate website and create easier navigation for information within 1 year.

GOAL 4: PROVIDE NEEDED SUPPORT FOR NEW BUSINESSES/INDUSTRY.

Action Items:

Chamber of Commerce will catalogue current businesses and industries relevant to future networking opportunities within 3 months.

Chamber of Commerce will devise a strategy for business to business networking opportunities for new business and industry within 3 months.

Development partners to collaborate on a maker space or incubator space within the downtown area or industrial park to foster local business creation and growth within 2 years.

Factor 4: Workforce

Lack of a skilled workforce was cited as a weakness for McIntosh County. This is a major hurdle that must be overcome in order to attract businesses. According to The Hollingsworth Companies (hollingsworthcos.com), the most attractive feature of any site is “abundant, trainable, high-value, dependable and flexible workers.”

Building the ideal workforce to entice the target industries will take time and investment. Investment in the current workforce will mean training programs that are made available and accessible to the target demographic. Investment in the future workforce will mean developing a sustainable partnership with the local school board and the technical college for the region. The school board will need to enhance and create career pathways that provide training for jobs in distribution and logistics, light manufacturing, and defense and aerospace. Building a better workforce is the foundation for creating a sustainable and diversified economy for McIntosh County.

GOAL 1: INCREASE NUMBER OF SKILLED WORKERS WITHIN MCINTOSH COUNTY BY 20% OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS.

Action Items:

IDA to take on workforce development role responsible for tracking workforce development and implementation of workforce programs and act as education partner within 8 months.

School board to enhance pathways for high demand skills such as welding, construction, and machining within 1 year.

School board to partner with higher education to make career academy certification and dual enrollment available on premises of McIntosh Academy within 2 years.

School board to apply for grants to build facilities for career programs.

School needs to institute “soft” skills curriculum such as “The BEST” program sponsored by the Georgia Department of Labor within 1 year.

School and development partners need to establish apprenticeship programs with local businesses within 1 year.

Development partners to establish an Education taskforce to review goals of workforce development, to be inclusive of other community groups, and foster a sense of community involvement in the school system; to meet quarterly within 3 months.

IDA to consider participation in “ACT”^{*} national certified work ready program within 1 year.

School to participate in “Go Build Georgia” program within 2 years.

IDA and School Board to partner with Coastal Pines Technical College to offer evening courses to build existing workforce at MCA Career Academy within 2 years.

Chamber of Commerce to partner with Georgia department labor to educate potential workforce on opportunity through outreach within 6 months.

Development partners to host computer literacy programs at a suitable site to bring skill levels up for aging workforce within 1 year.

Notes ^{*}The National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) is an industry-recognized, portable, evidence-based credential that certifies essential skills needed for workplace success. This credential is used across all sectors of the economy and verifies the following cognitive skills:

- Problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Reading and using work-related text
- Applying information from workplace documents to solve problems
- Applying mathematical reasoning to work-related problems
- Setting up and performing work-related mathematical calculations
- Locating, synthesizing, and applying information that is presented graphically
- Comparing, summarizing, and analyzing information presented in multiple related graphics

Sources: ACT website

Factor 5: Protect and Improve Quality of Life

Quality of life is a concept that means different things to different people. One of the most often cited reasons for the location of a new business, especially a small business, is quality of life.

However, it is one of the areas policymakers most often overlook in attracting entrepreneurs and the highly skilled people who most often work for them (“What Do the Best Entrepreneurs Want in a City?” Endeavor Insight, February 4, 2014).

Through our many conversations and formal interviews, residents cited proximity to the water and small town feel as the most compelling quality of life factors for remaining in McIntosh. The quality of life factors that many feel are most lacking are convenient access to shopping (either grocery or big box), variety of restaurants, and leisure activities for children and adults.

According to the U. S. Census Bureau, 14.9% of the residents of McIntosh County were living below the poverty line from 2008-2012. The County should survey these families to determine their critical needs and formulate a plan to decrease the percentage of residents living in poverty line within 2 years. The plan should set attainable goals, for example, decreasing the number of families living in poverty from 15% to 10% by the 2020 census. Increase the number of housing units and options for housing choices, including a greater range of options for rental housing for families and single people within 3 years.

GOAL 1: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN MCINTOSH COUNTY AS A MEANS TO RECRUIT BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY AND ATTRACT NEW RESIDENTS.

Action Items:

Walkability/Mobility - Highway 251 is currently used by pedestrians as a means to get to work or to get to retail outlets. The lack of sidewalks makes this dangerous, especially for disabled citizens who use wheelchairs and scooters. The County needs to plan for and provide pedestrian connections for Highway 251 and Highway 17. The County should complete an ADA compliant sidewalk and crosswalk plan, with appropriate signalization, along Highway 251 and Highway 17 within 1 year.

Recreation - McIntosh County should develop a plan to enhance recreation facilities in public places and begin implementation within 1 year. Elements of the plan should include using

current facilities and having multiple options for sports and activities for all ages. Additionally, the County should explore options to improve access to waterways and enhance recreation activities in this area.

Retail Opportunities – The Industry Development Authority should work to attract more retail opportunities and enhance current offerings such as a Super Fred’s or attracting an additional grocery store within 5 years.

Multi-Purpose Arts Center – locate an available building that can be modified and renovated to serve as a multi-purpose building within 3 months. Develop a Scope of Work and issue a Request for Proposals for Design and Construction for this project, to include a cinema, performing arts theater, art gallery, and workshop for classes; establish a completion date within 1-2 years.

Library improvements – apply for grants to improve the library’s outdoor decoration, indoor facilities, and add more books, especially children’s books and large print books within 1 year.

The library should have more functions, such as free workshops or classes for senior citizens who want to learn basic computer skills and introducing McIntosh County history to tourists.

Local government to research options to increase public access to the water and outlying beaches within 1 year.

Factor 6: Tourism

Historically, McIntosh County has been dependent upon tourism either through visitors to historic sites like Fort King George and Ashantilly Center, natural areas such as the Harris Neck Wildlife Refuge, Sapelo Island, and Darien's waterfront, or shopping destinations such as the Darien Outlet Mall. When the recession and subsequent economic downturn hit McIntosh County, as in all areas, tourism waned.

When an economic crisis hits, one of the first items cut from family budgets is discretionary spending such as tourism. A community solely dependent upon tourism will be more adversely affected in times of economic distress than a community with a more diverse economy. While it is important to support tourism in an area as rich as McIntosh, it is doubly important to diversify employment opportunities for the local economy to grow and strengthen. Tourism as an economic driver is less stable than traditional industry such as manufacturing and logistics. Job creation from traditional industries produces a vibrant middle class, while the job creation from tourism is negligible in comparison.

Every effort should be made to sustain the historic draws for tourism, but investing in artificial tourism lures such as a replica lighthouse would not reap the economic benefits that investing in infrastructure such as sidewalks would bring. The Sapelo Island lighthouse is a natural tourism draw and competition with that should be avoided.

Eco-tourism is steadily growing and efforts should be made to support this trend through easy access to water front, increased walkability, and safer streets. Marketing to the boating community is a natural avenue as is targeting travelers who might normally just pass through, but could be enticed to spend a few hours in McIntosh taking a break and enjoying good food and the feel of a small town's relaxed lifestyle.

To coordinate the tourism efforts, a Welcome Center should be located directly off of I-95 on Exit 49 in Darien. The Welcome Center should have a visitor center component, clean restrooms, and some space for relaxing. This would be a great opportunity to consolidate efforts currently being spread among the welcome center at the art museum, the visitor center opposite Georgia Power and the information center at the outlet mall. As discussed above, these multiple sites and

conflicting signage are often confusing; however, consolidating efforts to one central location would make it much easier to capture the potential tourism market. Creation of a new welcome center could also be an opportunity to add a small conference center space for local groups to utilize and a small business center so that travelers can conduct business while on the road.

The former Café Risqué property would be the ideal location. It is a short drive from the interchange, a spacious site, and it is on the way into Darien. Furthermore, in its current state, it is an eyesore and a detriment to the sense of place along the arterial roadway. In addition to the interior amenities, the Welcome Center should offer adequate shaded parking for automobiles and RVs, a fenced dog park with adequate waste disposal and a doggie water fountain, and some type of play structure for kids. The concept is to provide a welcome respite from the road with safe, convenient parking, places to plug in and charge if necessary, and provide information on what great things McIntosh has to offer.

GOAL: TO RECOGNIZE TOURISM AS A SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND EMPHASIZE EXISTING LOCAL ASSETS THROUGH MARKETING AND THE PROMOTION OF ECO-TOURISM.

Action Items:

The local government to construct a Welcome Center in McIntosh in the next 3 years. The ideal site for a visitor center is off of I-95 on Hwy 251 close to the exit.

Chamber of Commerce to relocate the visitor center to the current IDA building providing a central location for tourists in the downtown area within 2 years.

Chamber of Commerce to consolidate Welcome Center, Visitors Center, and Tourist Information Center signage into their brand eliminating confusing duplication of signage within 1 year.

Chamber of Commerce to coordinate marketing and branding plan utilizing the Coastal theme within 1 year.

Chamber of Commerce to strategize on the cultural heritage corridor, including Scottish Heritage and Gullah-Geechee historic corridors, within McIntosh and incorporate into the overall marketing and branding plan within 2 years.

Chamber of Commerce to host tourism discussions with stakeholders to formulate strategy on branding and marketing of McIntosh within 1 year.

Development partners to coordinate on social media and business media content to unify the McIntosh brand within 3 months.

Local government to catalogue existing bike trails and note condition within 6 months.

Local government to coordinate fixing existing trails and sidewalks where needed and construction of new sidewalks to fit in with goals of the comprehensive plan within 2 years.

Local government to construct pedestrian crossing on Hwy 251 to make safer pathways for tourists and patrons of the gas stations and hotels allowing them greater access to restaurants and the outlet mall within 1 year.

Local government to construct sidewalks along Hwy 251 to Hwy 17 allowing for safe passage of disabled citizens within 2 years.

Development partners need to create a gateway feature at intersection of Hwy 251 and Hwy 17 welcoming people into the community within 2 years.

Local government to enforce ordinances to clean up arterial roadways and maintain a pleasant environment within 1 year.

Factor 7: Retirees

The American Planning Association’s report “Investing in Place for Economic Growth and Competitiveness” – May 2014, found that both Millennials and Baby Boomers think that quality of life (transportation options, affordability, parks, local vitality, etc.) is more important than job prospects and economic health in choosing where to live. Additionally, fewer than 10% of the respondents indicated that they want to live in an auto-dependent suburb; most would prefer to live in areas with walkability, access to transit, and proximity to key resources. According to the Census Bureau, 21.1% of the McIntosh population is over age 65 which is nearly double the state statistic for the same age demographic. Clearly, the McIntosh demographic is aging and is shown to be a draw for retirees. As a desired community for retirees, the following objectives will help to meet the demands for this group.

GOAL: CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR RETIREES OFFERING CONNECTIVITY TO THE COMMUNITY, ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE, ACCESS TO SERVICES, AND PROVIDE AN ADA FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT.

Action Items:

McIntosh County Board of Health to identify possible locations for an Urgent Care Facility in McIntosh County within 1 year.

McIntosh County Board of Health to negotiate with a health provider to provide a walk-in urgent care facility in McIntosh within 1 year.

McIntosh County Board of Health to negotiate with a health provider for a 24-hour emergency care facility in McIntosh within the next 3 years.

McIntosh County Board of Health to negotiate with senior care providers to locate a nursing home facility within 2 years.

Local government to consider offering additional senior and adult day care options within a senior center or negotiate through a private provider within 2 years.

Local government to research funding options and apply for grants to improve senior center facilities and built environment to provide additional functions such as adult daycare within 1-2 years.

Factor 8: Industry

McIntosh County does not have a large industrial base. The seafood industry is represented by a few processors and a boat ramp fabricator. While the seafood industry should be encouraged to grow and every effort should be made to protect the shrimping and fishing heritage of the area, concerted efforts should also be made to attract additional industry to diversify the economy. This section is concerned with the promotion of current industry and the infrastructure for new and existing industry.

Action Items:

IDA should address roadway concerns in the Tidewater Industrial Park for semi-truck traffic and develop a plan of action within 6 months.

IDA should implement the roadway plan within 2 years

Local government to devise a plan of action for the King Swamp Road entrances into the industrial park within 3 months.

IDA to work on recycling services scenarios for potential industries within 1 year.

IDA should communicate with existing businesses, including seafood, metal fabrication, and timber about relocation opportunities at the industrial park within 1 year.

IDA needs to inventory local agricultural industries and determine how best to recruit their logistics to Tidewater Industrial Park within 1 year.

The Targeted Industry Analysis determined that emerging industries such as light manufacturing and drone manufacturing have moderate to high growth potential. The IDA should contact the companies listed in the TIA within 1 year.

Chamber to continue to call on existing and prospective businesses members quarterly and track the responses and contact details within 2 months.

Factor 9: Small Business

Small business is defined as “one that is independently owned and operated, is organized for profit, and is not dominant in its field” (Small Business Administration, sba.gov). Under these parameters, all businesses in McIntosh would be considered small businesses. There are over 28 million small businesses in the US with over 50% of the population working for a small business (Business Insider; businessinsider.com). As such, it is very important to encourage the growth of the existing small businesses and provide avenues for creating more of them. One of the biggest impediments to creation of a small business is lack of funding

Action Items:

Development partners to consider creation of revolving loan fund to help with startup capital for new businesses within 1 year.

Development partners should support entrepreneurship by creating a small business incubator, in conjunction with revolving loan fund, located in downtown Darien within 2 years.

Chamber of Commerce should develop a program at the high school to teach entrepreneurial skills within 1 year.

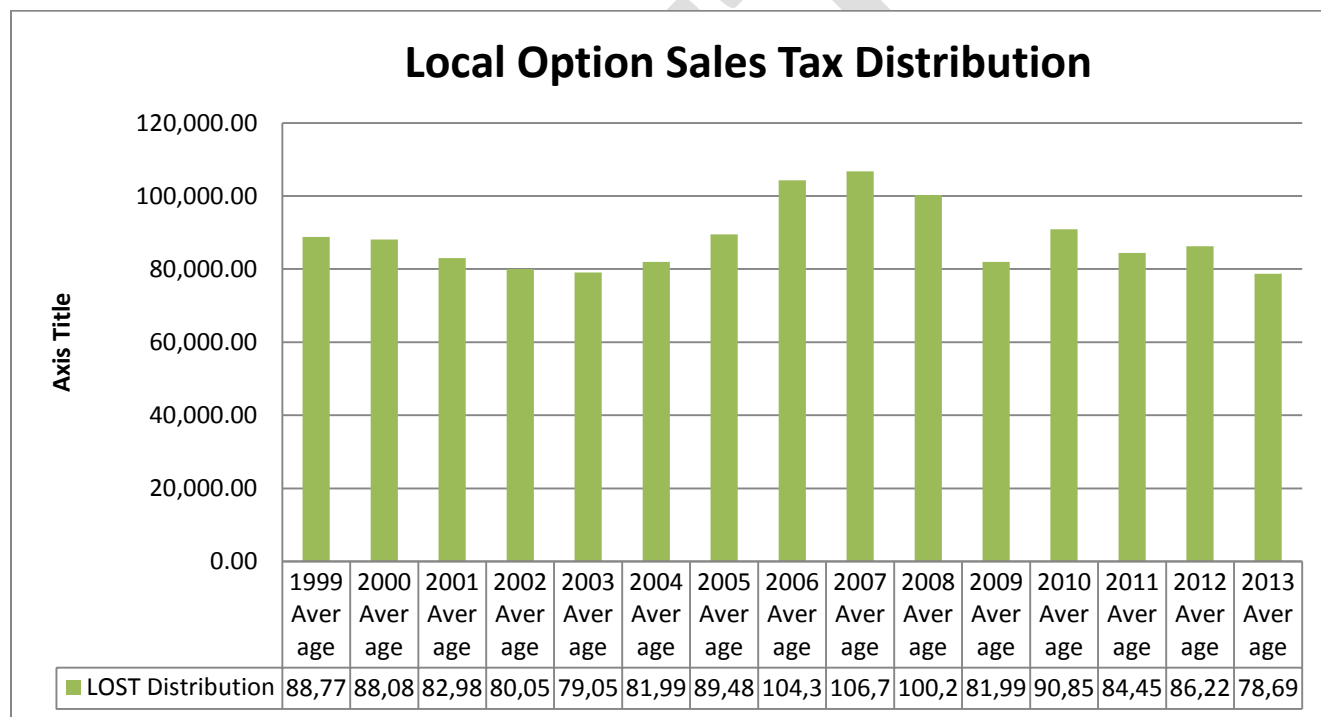
Chamber should find local partners that can be resources and partner them with potential business owners within 1 year.

IDA should meet with Human Resources from local military establishments and visit the Fort Stewart Job Fair to encourage veteran owned business creation and location to McIntosh within 1 year.

Chamber to continue to call on existing and prospective businesses members quarterly and track the responses and contact details within 2 months.

Factor 10: Government

As illustrated in the graph below, sales tax revenue has reduced drastically since 2007. As a strategy to mitigate the loss of sales tax revenue, the local government should consider consolidation of city/county services. Consolidation of services could lower costs of government and reduce red tape. Many local governments have consolidated with tremendous economic benefits. The local government should look at planning & zoning, fire departments and economic development departments. Further study should be given to see if this is feasible and document the steps to take and departments where the most benefit can be found.



Action Items:

Local government to commission a cost benefit analysis on consolidation of city/county services, departments, etc. within 1 year.